

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Beirut Bonham, and I am from Haddam.

I stand in support of SB284: AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS. Expanding access to HUSKY up to age 18 regardless of immigration status is an important step in making sure our immigrant community has access to the healthcare we all need and deserve. But our work doesn't end with expanding access up to age 18; we need to open access to HUSKY and healthcare to all immigrants of any age, including parents and adults.

Lack of access to healthcare is a community issue as well as a human rights issue. Underserved communities in Connecticut that do not have access to care predicated on immigration status, financial status or lack of coverage for a myriad of other reasons, impact the overall function of the communities where the uninsured live and work.

I have, at certain points in my life, been uninsured. My lack of access to a healthcare provider put me in a position to weigh my health versus the financial implication of not seeking the care I needed. This is an unsustainable way to live given the true dollar amount that healthcare costs- those costs are measured in lost productivity, lost income, long term disability and, not addressing health concerns in a timely manner can escalate the end cost for families in a way that is devastating. Undocumented families deserve the same level care as any other person facing illness or disease. This legislation will ensure that our most vulnerable citizens do not bear the brunt of an unjust system that lives for profit without any sound regulatory body to oversee where dollars are actually allocated.

The state of Connecticut is able to extend coverage to children who need it. Last year the state expanded the age parameters of HUSKY and the passage of SB284 this year would ensure that children will not age out of coverage once they turn 9 years old and be left without healthcare. Expanding coverage to the age of 18 is simply a stop gap measure. In the long term, it should not just be children who are covered, but their families as well. Healthcare access is a human right. No family, undocumented or not, should have to make the very real and tenuous decision to not access care because it is unsafe to do so.

In closing, I support S.B. 284 and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation. Looking forward, I ask the committee to work towards opening access to all immigrants regardless of age.

Thank you for your time,  
Beirut Bonham